



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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SAVE THE NHS

This month student nurses and junior doctors are taking up the fight to save the National Health Service.

At the end of the month, on 30 January, a "Health Campaigns Together" conference, backed by the Unite and Unison trade unions, meets in London.

The campaign for the NHS Reinstatement Bill drafted by Allyson Pollock has been boosted by the Corbyn surge in the Labour Party, with a regular page on the campaign's website now reporting on support from local Labour Parties.

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Support junior doctors and student nurses — see page 12

Inside:

Syria: sectarian split grows

Syria is separating out along sectarian lines. UN-negotiated evacuations have taken 126 Sunni rebel fighters and civilians from Zabadani, north west of Damascus, which was the last major rebel enclave along the Lebanon border.

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Gallipoli: savage, bloody, pointless

Janine Booth describes what happened at the battle of Gallipoli in World War 1.

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What's wrong with Star Wars?



Eric Lee reviews the latest Star Wars film.

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Join Labour!

Solidarity interviews
Clive Lewis MP about
Corbyn, Momentum,
reselection and
socialism.

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Greek “communists” oppose civil partnership law

QNEWS

By Theodora Polenta

“Is sex dirty? Only when it’s being done right” — Woody Allen.

On Tuesday 22 December, the Greek Parliament ratified the Civil Union Agreement for Same-Sex Couples. The new legal framework for co-habiting couples is also a limited step towards the abolition of discrimination for the LGBTIQI community in Greece.

The legislation makes the termination of civil partnership more difficult and gives rights to “civil partners” over inheritance, social security (pensions), and taxation issues. The government has yet to move to legislate for political marriage between persons of the same sex or for their right to adopt children; both issues have been postponed for the future. Another weakness is the lack of provision for transgender people, such as the facilitation of the change of personal documents without medical pre-conditions.

The cohabitation agreement puts the Greek state in line with EU legislation and it was well overdue; the postponement of these changes has led to Greece being condemned by the European Court of Human Rights.

The progressive step was made despite church hostility.

The Metropolitan of Kalavrita and Aegialia Ambrosios, at a concert of “humanity”, said among other things that “homosexuality is a social crime and sin. Homosexuals are scum of society ... MPs supporting the [law] deserve spitting at, as they are not people but freaks of nature, suffering mentally and spiritually; as they are much more dangerous than some who live in the



Defying the Orthodox church

madhouse.”

Not to be outdone, the Metropolitan of Korinthia among his wishes to church goers for a happy New Year, (while Greece is in economic crisis and refugees continue to drown into the Aegean Sea) talked about the “axis of evil” of the Tsipras government and the sodomism and corruption the law will be bring; “cursing” the Prime Minister’s own young children, hoping they “turn out gay” and that the Prime Minister will be attending their civil union partnership ceremonies.

PROTEST

Protestors demonstrated outside the Metropolitan Cathedral of Athens in response to church reactions. Two young men dressed in priest robes kissed in front of the Cathedral.

These statements should not surprise us. The Church’s role is to maintain conservatism in society, to instil the notion that we are “servants of God” and therefore our bodies do not belong to us, our choices for our lives are not defined by us, but by some gentlemen in black clothes and beards.

The bill was supported by Syriza, with votes from its coalition partners ANEL, Pasok, Potami and the

Centrists’ Union. Only 19 out of 75 New Democracy MPs voted in favour. Golden Dawn opposed. But very significantly, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) voted against the legislation.

The KKE have tried to justify their obstructionist socially regressive political stance with Marxism-out-of-context quotations, but they reflect Greek social traditions: opposition to deviation from the norm, adherence to divine scripture — reactionary and regressive philosophies against enlightenment.

The Secretary General of KKE, Koutsoubas, stressed that the decision for two men to live together is private, so “it should not concern the public sphere”. He also said that KKE condemns homophobic attacks.

The KKE’s stance should not surprise us. They follow Stalinist Russia’s persecution of homosexuals. All the trash of class and patriarchal society that with Bolshevism flew out of the door, Stalinism reintroduced: the glorification of the nuclear family, under the rationale that family institutions were being attacked by capitalism.

The KKE reproduces the classic-conservative argument that the child needs a gender binary role

model of man and woman in the family environment; they try to support this “argument” by basing it upon the “biology” of the sexes. Children who grow up in single-parent families, are “doomed” not to grow “naturally”?

So this party of the “working class” can fight for workers’ rights only if it means the rights of heterosexual workers? LGBTI people are

not some kind of “exotic fruit”, isolated from society and the working class; on the contrary they are a vital and organic component of the working class movement.

The homophobic and reactionary positions of KKE have nothing to do with Marxism. The left and all progressive forces of the civil rights movements should uncompromisingly demand: equal rights and equal treatment of same-sex and heterosexual couples, at all levels and all spheres of public life and legislation; ending every discrimination based on sexual orientation, colour, religion, gender.

Ultimately the complete freedom of the individual, including LGBTI people, can not be achieved outside of the liberation of the whole of society from the shackles of economic, social and cultural oppression.

• Longer version of this article at bit.ly/1TC9741

Resistance in a year of fear

By the (US) International Socialist Organization

The horrors of the past months shouldn’t stop us from remembering that 2015 was a year of polarization in US society — with the increasing confidence of right-wing forces taking place at the same time as a less-remarked-upon growth in those looking for an alternative on the left.

At a time when the airwaves are filled with ridiculous police theories about the “radicalization” of Muslims, we need to locate and encourage the genuine and healthy process of left-wing radicalisation wherever it’s taking place.

In the days before the ISIS attacks in Paris, US headlines were dominated by the wave of anti-racist protests sweeping across college campuses in the wake of historic demonstrations at the University of Missouri that pushed out the school’s president.

There’s the most obvious and widespread expression of people shifting leftward: the Democratic presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders, who is polling at over 30 percent as an open (if quite moderate) socialist in party polls.

Amid the media’s Trump cacophony, it can be easy to forget — or never find out in the first place — how small a section of the population his supporters represent. As political analyst Nate Silver wrote at FiveThirtyEight.com:

“Right now, [Trump] has 25 to 30 percent of the vote in polls among the roughly 25 percent of Americans who identify as Republican. (That’s something like 6 to 8 percent of the electorate overall, or about the same share of people who think the Apollo moon landings were faked.)”

The point here is not to minimise the real impact of the spread

of Trump’s poisonous ideas.

Instead, the reason to step back and gain a wider view of the political landscape so that we can more accurately assess where we are on the defensive, but also where we can push back.

The understandable alarm over the Trump minority can distract from the main dynamic in the presidential race: while the Republican Party is in crisis because of its inability to find a candidate to beat Trump, Hillary Clinton is consolidating her commanding lead in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Clinton looks certain to be her party’s nominee not because her message is more appealing to voters, but on the contrary, because the Democratic Party is not a democratic party.

Rather it’s an organisation whose major decisions and nominations are determined by big money donations, corporate media connections and a rigged internal structure.

If and when Clinton becomes the nominee, there will be enormous pressure on Sanders supporters and activists, even if they would prefer to stay independent of Clinton and the Democrats, to join in the Clinton campaign, based on the familiar logic of the lesser evil.

[That] argument will sound convincing to many, but it’s a losing strategy. We can’t defeat Republican Islamophobia and anti-immigrant racism by backing a party whose current president carried out the most deportations in history and waged endless wars that have fuelled terrorism and anti-Muslim hatred.

There’s another way, and we’ve seen that it works — by pressing forward with protests [and the left alternative].

• Full article bit.ly/1JVgMoL

Hutchison workers deflect sackings

By Martin Thomas

After 102 days of bitter struggle, Hutchison port workers in Brisbane and Sydney, members of the Maritime Union of Australia, voted on 16 November to rescind their previous Enterprise Bargaining Agreement and to vote in another EBA for the next three years.

The dispute started on 6 August, when 97 workers, about half the workforce, were sacked overnight by text message and email. The sacked workers ran a 24/7 protest line at the Brisbane and Sydney terminals, with the support of the workers not sacked, who were called in for minimal working hours but handled very little traffic.

In the eventual deal, the job losses have been reduced and MUA members who accept the Voluntary Separation Package will receive no less than the equivalent of 26 weeks’ pay. Since no worker at

Hutchison has been there for as much as three years, without the deal redundancy payments would have been minimal.

The union has put up very strong fences around the use of casuals and how they must be sourced, and made sure the new EBA cannot be used by Hutchison to undercut its competitors and help “level down” conditions on the wharves.

MUA Queensland branch secretary Bob Carnegie said: “My heart feels heavy with the loss of jobs, but my conscience is clear, knowing that the rank and file delegates and the officials left no stone unturned in our battle to get the best possible outcome in a very difficult situation”.

The dispute suffered from loss of momentum after it was pushed into a war of attrition, with the protests at the gates hanging on week after week to see what would come of court proceedings or promises from Hutchison to negotiate.

Hutchison bosses were evidently willing to keep the terminals barely “ticking over” for a long time, despite the big losses that must have brought them on their hundreds of millions of dollars of fixed-capital investment in the cranes and other equipment at the terminals. Throughput in Brisbane is currently running at a tiny 20,000 teu per year. Hutchison have stalled on releasing financial facts, but our best calculation is that to make the investment profitable, Hutchison would have to do something like 300,000 teu.

Hutchison, the world’s biggest container-terminal operator, surely have plans in mind for the future of this, their first foothold in Australia, and the aim of the sackings would have been to clear the ground for those plans.

The union was not able to escape some losses, but remains standing, and capable of fighting the next round.

Sectarian split grows on eve of new Syria talks

By Ralph Peters

On 1 January Saudi Arabia put to death Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, a Shia cleric and leader of reformist opposition. 46 other prisoners were killed on the same day.

Saudi Arabia carried out a total of 157 death sentences in 2015,

putting it third in the world behind Iran (more than 289 judicial killings in 2014) and China (figures secret, but Amnesty's last estimate was 1718-plus in 2008).

Saudi authorities said that most of the 46 were Al Qaeda or other Sunni dissidents. But some were Shia. The executions have further sharpened Shia-Sunni polarisation in the whole region.

Iran may now pull out of the UN-sponsored peace talks due to start on 25 January. If the talks go ahead, Iran's and Assad's hand is strengthened. Saudi Arabia has taken the role of coordinating the "moderate opposition" to Assad in the peace talks with US and UN agreement. Its execution of its leading Shia reformist cleric makes it easy for Assad to mo-

bilise international resistance to concessions to Saudi-sponsored forces in Syria.

None of the parties who may gather round the negotiating table on 25 January aim for a democratic, pluralist, non-sectarian, multi-ethnic Syria where democratic rights are protected. All of them have disgraceful records in working with religious-sectarian

forces and supporting brutal authoritarian governments in the area — or are those governments themselves.

If any "peace deal" is negotiated, and that is doubtful, it will probably be through a partition of Syria — initially by freezing many of the present military front-lines between the competing forces.

The forces in Syria

The Syrian Army and its allies have been responsible for most of the over 250,000 civilian deaths in Syria. At the outbreak of the civil war, the army was about 220-280,000 strong.

It is reported to have lost over 50,000 dead. Many others have deserted. Something like 40 or 50,000, mainly Sunni Muslims who refuse to take part in the army's attacks on civilian Sunni communities, have defected to opposition militias.

In April 2015 the army's strength was estimated at about 110,000. Iranian and Hezbollah forces have increasingly carried out operations alongside the army, or even taken charge of them.

The most notorious of Assad's auxiliary militias are the shabiha, organisations of thugs set up by Bashar Assad's uncle Rifaat al-Assad in the 70s and 80s to do dirty work for the regime. In 2011 the shabiha made brutal attacks on the initially broadly democratic and secular protest movement and deliberately provoked sectarian reactions by targeting Sunni communities.

Jaysh al-Sha'bi, another unofficial Alawite force, was reorganised in 2011. It is reported to be 100,000 strong but ineffective as a military force.

MODELLED

Since the Iranians moved in, Jaysh al-Sha'bi has been effectively replaced by the National Defence Force (NDF), built under the direction of the Iranian Hossein Hamadani, and modelled on the Iranian Basij.

The NDF has been more explicitly recruited as a religious anti-Sunni sectarian force. In a collapsing economy, with huge employment, whole villages of Alawite men have been recruited to the NDF for reasons both mercenary and sectarian.

Iran probably calculates that the NDF will, like Hezbollah, have an ideological loyalty to Iran even if Assad is removed.

Russia has had influence with the Assad regime for decades. Putin may have saved the day for Assad when he began his aerial bombardment of Assad's opponents in September 2015. However Russia has avoided sending troops to reinforce Assad, beyond a few "specialists".

That leaves most of the work on

the ground to Iran. Iran had troops operating on Assad's side officially from 2013 and in reality from 2012. Over the last four years it has granted Syria billions of dollars of military aid. Its casualties have been increasing — well over a hundred in the last few months of 2015 — but low enough to be sustainable for its authoritarian regime.

In October Iranian President Hassan Rouhani denied rumours that Russia would be able to muscle in on — or transform — the Axis of Resistance that has united Assad's Shia allies. The Axis is an informal international military alliance. Since it was first mentioned in 2006, it has not been much more than a declaration of a shared anti-Israel, anti-US position. But now it has evolved into an international political Shia-Islamist movement, a counterpoint to Saudi Arabia's international Sunni coalition.

Before 2012 Hamas was a part of the Axis, despite also being linked to the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood, but it has withdrawn because of the Syrian civil war.

The Lebanese Shia-Islamist movement Hezbollah became dependent on Assad after 1979 for training facilities and for military equipment sent from Iran. For Assad it provided an armed force, experienced especially in small scale guerrilla-type warfare.

Two years ago it was estimated that Hezbollah numbered only about 5,000 regulars and 15,000 reservists, and out of that number about 5,000 were committed at any one time to Assad's war. That is a small number in comparison with the other militias, but Hezbollah are important because of their military experience, their commitment, and their capacity to draw in Shia foreign fighters to come and fight for Assad, such as the Abu Fadl al-Abbas Brigade (AFAB) of primarily Iraqi Shia volunteers.

Hezbollah, unlike the Iranians, do not appear to Syrians as foreign intruders and have been widely distributed among Syrian and Iranian forces, often as officers.

They are largely located in the areas near the Lebanon border and may be most interested in consolidating their hold there.

Daesh tried to undercut Hezbollah with the Beirut bombing of August 2015. That did not succeed in triggering wider communal disorder in Lebanon. There are some re-

cent reports of demoralisation in the Hezbollah forces after three years with nothing to show for it but a stalemate.

Iran's primary concern is to expand its influence and power across the region. Assad's regime has mutated considerably during the civil war, accommodating to Iranian influence and increasingly relying on brutal religious sectarianism to consolidate its rule. Iran will want to consolidate that change and impose its own political model on whatever territory Assad or his successors hold. Iran has mobilised its regular Revolutionary Guards into Syria and probably intended them to stay.

Russia will have links with former Ba'athists in the regime who are nervous of Iranian domination, but it does not have forces on ground to stop Iran's project, and is will likely to accommodate to it.

The moves for peace talks are overwhelmingly driven by outside interests and not by any internal force in Syria. The outside powers may have a limited joint interest in beating back Daesh, but they have nothing like a joint project to replace it.

SAUDI

Saudi Arabia looks on Daesh as a troublesome competitor for the allegiance of Sunni Wahhabists and Islamists throughout the world.

Daesh, by actually building a quasi-state power with many similarities to Saudi Arabia, has created huge embarrassment for the Saudi tyrants and their allies.

Turkey's president Erdogan pursues a different model of authoritarian Islamism, and has had a useful modus vivendi with Daesh. Erdogan allowed and encouraged Daesh's war on the Rojavan Kurds. In return Daesh did little that might destabilise Erdogan's rule.

Al Qaeda and Daesh have built their organisations with anti-Shia atrocities, particularly in Iraq. But Daesh has not targeted Turkey's 25% Shia minority, the Alevi.

Erdogan was a close ally of Morsi in Egypt. Morsi's removal from power and the outlawing of his Muslim Brotherhood by the new military-dominated regime in Egypt were strongly supported by Saudi Arabia.

Audacious international action against Daesh would create considerable problems for Erdogan. Like the Saudis, but for different reasons, he will want to allow Daesh supporters to be reorganised under



Hezbollah are an important fighting force for Assad

the leadership of the safer Wahhabism of the Saudi regime.

The US is unwilling to repeat an Iraq-style occupation in Syria.

It has instead invested in attempts to organise pro-US militias in Syria. Those attempts have been spectacular failures, with those US-trained groups being gobbled up by Islamist militias. For now, the US and its allies are allowing the Saudis to become the paymasters for most of the militias and to shape them politically. This could become a major cause of embarrassment to them.

On top of all the political complications, there are economic ones.

Syria is both a source of hydrocarbon fuels and a potential route for gas and oil pipelines. There are two rival pipeline plans: Iran-Iraq-Syria-Turkey, and Qatar-Saudi-Jordan-Syria-Turkey. Some analysts have argued that Qatar's involvement in Syria stems from Assad blocking the Qatar-Turkey line.

If contiguous Iranian-dominated and Shia-dominated territory can

be consolidated across Syria-Iraq-Iran, that gets in the way of Sunni co-operation between the Gulf states and Turkey. With Iran coming out of the cold of US sanctions, Iran may want to position itself as a big supplier to Turkey and beyond that to Europe.

The external powers want peace in Syria — at least, enough of it to allow stability for business — but they have competing interests to be served by that peace.

And the continuing war feeds profits in the arms industry. The US arms industry currently sells Saudi and the UAE \$8 billion per year in equipment alone. Britain and France are not far behind. There will be strong business pressures to allow Saudi Arabia to continue to invest in arming forces in Syria.

In 2014 \$92.7 million of arms were bought from Bulgaria alone to be supplied to Syrian militias by Saudi Arabia. Without such arms supplies and subsidies, the militias and armies in Syria could not continue their war.

Sectarian division

Syria is separating out along sectarian lines.

UN-negotiated evacuations have taken 126 Sunni rebel fighters and civilians from Zabadani, north west of Damascus, an enclave surrounded and bombed by government forces and their Hezbollah allies.

Simultaneously 336 injured defenders were evacuated from two northern Shia villages, al-Foua and Kefraya, besieged by Jaysh el Fateh, a collective of opposition groups that includes Ahrar al-Sham and the al-Qaeda affiliated

al-Nusra Front. The Shia will go to Turkey and then be relocated to government-held areas in Syria.

On 26 December an agreement broke down to evacuate 2000 Islamist fighters and residents from the Palestinian camp in Yarmouk and south Damascus. 200 al-Nusra Front fighters were able to move from Deraa in the south to Idlib province in the north east, in exchange for Iranian officers captured by rebels.

Similar deals have seen fighters move from rebel areas of Homs.

Spanish politics at a crossroads

THE LEFT

Spanish elections (held on Sunday 20 December) marked a defeat for the ruling right wing party. The Partido Popular only took 123 seats out of 230, 63 fewer than four years ago.

The Spanish social-democratic party, the PSOE, won 90 seats, Podemos 69, and Ciudadanos, a rightwing anti-corruption party, 40.

We republish (from the website of the French Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste) an interview with Alex Merlo, parliamentary attaché for the Member of the European Parliament Miguel Urbán Crespo, members of Podemos, and of Anticapitalistas, the Spanish section of the Fourth International.

What are the consequences of these election results?

It is chaos. There is no way to form a government. It is a first in the history of the country.

Maybe a majority is possible with Ciudadanos, but it is not likely. This party has indicated that they will let the largest party rule, so they won't vote against a government led by the PP. But that doesn't make a majority.

The only solution is for the PSOE to enter government with the PP. That will tear the PSOE apart and if it allies with the PP in a grand coalition, it will explode. The PSOE can abstain, but that is not likely.

I think that we will move to have new elections in a few months. This is a period of great political instability.

How do you analyse these results?

There is a failure of the big parties, a breakdown due to corruption and very powerful social discontent.

There is a broad consensus in the country that says that the big parties are shite. A new generation, coming from the Indignados movement, is fighting for another solution and so they are getting results.

Ciudadanos got a much worse score than was predicted. At one point, they managed to position themselves as a force that was neither leftwing nor rightwing, but anti-corruption. But, during the campaign, they indicated that they would support the PP in forming a government. That meant that they appeared like a rightwing party supporting the ruling party, so they lost a lot of votes.

What about the Podemos campaign and its result?

The Podemos results were best in the regions where they turned to social movements, which was the orientation defended by Anticapitalistas.

In Catalonia, with the movement Barcelona en comú. In Galicia, with a platform made up of the Indignados movement, trade unionists, and activists from campaigns around housing, water and public services. In Valencia, the coalition was less radical, it was an alliance with a split from [Communist Party-led coalition] Izquierda Unida, with a platform that concentrated largely on fight-

ing corruption.

In Catalonia and the Basque country, Podemos came first because it looked like the force in favour of self-determination. It made self-determination a condition of talks with the PSOE.

What are the effects of these elections on the radical left?

Next to Podemos, Izquierda Unida has collapsed electorally. It only took two seats. Even though Podemos is broadly thought of as more radical than IU, the IU programme is still more leftwing than that of Podemos. For instance, we know that many Podemos activists voted IU for this reason.

There was no Anticapitalistas MP elected because the primaries within Podemos once again took place in an undemocratic fashion, which completely sidelined the minority in Podemos. Nevertheless, we are very politically close with the MPs elected in Catalonia. Not having any MPs makes it harder for us to be a political force with a presence in national debates.

Finally, Pablo Iglesias is calling on all other parties for a "historic compromise", an electoral reform (for proportional representation, mainly) and territorial reform (for self-determination). With these proposals, he has abandoned the proposal for a Constituent Assembly for constitutional reform and a transition process. This is not a logic of rupture, but the situation is very interesting because everything is destabilised in the country.

It is clear now that, within Podemos, the populist tendency wishes to integrate itself



Podemos election publicity

into the system and that we are now heading for some major internal conflicts.

We will also see how the social situation changes because, for a year now, everything has been centred on electoral questions, but there is an accumulation of experiences, of local struggles which open the possibility for a new phase of mobilisations.

• Original interview: bit.ly/1kHQsrs

The Stalinist campaign against the Spanish revolution

By Gerry Bates

Tear down the Glasgow waterfront statue of Stalinist sycophant Dolores Ibarruri ("La Pasionaria") and replace it by one of the Gorbals-born International Brigader Alexander Marcowich! This is the conclusion of a new Workers' Liberty pamphlet: *Lions Led by Jackals* — Stalinism in the International Brigades.

The pamphlet draws on the wealth of material — much of it previously unused — in the Communist International's archives of the International Brigades, published online by the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History in early 2015.

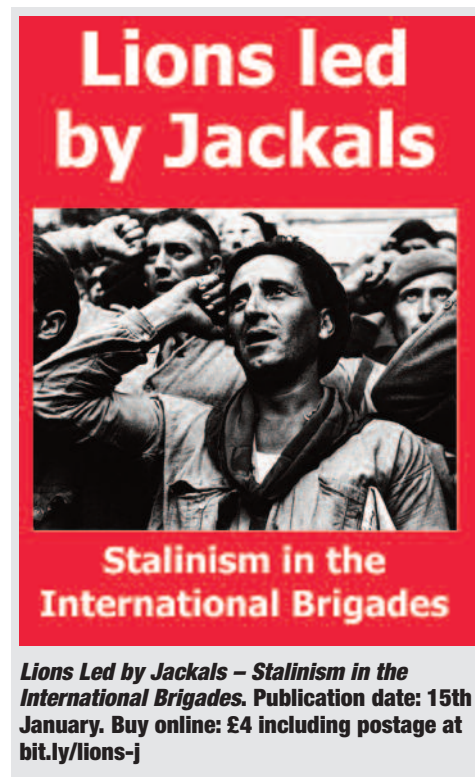
An abyss separates the political reality of the International Brigades from their portrayal in "official" labour movement history.

As the archived material quoted in the pamphlet confirms, the Brigades were a political project subject from the outset to the political dictates of Stalinism. From recruitment through to — for those who survived — repatriation, Stalinism controlled all aspects of life in the Brigades.

Recruitment to — and exclusion from — the Brigades was controlled by the national Communist Parties. Complaints about the "quality" of volunteers and the methods used to recruit them were also addressed to the national Communist Parties.

Many volunteers thought — understandably — that they were going to Spain to fight for working-class revolution. According to an archived report on the British Battalion:

"Especially at the beginning, English comrades arrived in Spain with a lot of illusions.



A considerable number of them thought that they were joining a proletarian army, and that they were fighting in a proletarian revolution."

Needless to say, Brigaders were given a political "education" to disabuse them of such "misunderstandings". What that "education" involved is clear from the archives.

The Brigades were not a proletarian army

but "international units of the Popular Front (national and international)." Their task was not proletarian revolution but "the plebeian resolution of the tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution."

Archived material quoted in the pamphlet highlights the attitude of the Stalinist champions of Popular Frontism to other anti-fascist political forces in Spain.

Anarchism was, just about, acceptable. It was a product of Spanish backwardness. And it was heading in the right direction: Anarchist leaders had joined the Popular Front governments, and the anarchist militia had been incorporated into the government's armed forces.

But the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) was "a band of murderers, wreckers and spies" at the centre of a vast conspiracy involving "degenerate, declassified intellectual philistines, spies, agents, common criminals, terrorists, diversionary elements, swindlers, black marketeers, sexually degenerate elements, and professional whores and pimps."

Trotskyism was likewise beyond the pale: "The unity of the People's Front, like unity at an international level, depends on the liquidation of Trotskyism. It is impossible to tolerate within the Popular Front the accomplices of fascism, those who have tried to sabotage the Soviet Union."

The pamphlet also highlights two issues largely or completely ignored in "orthodox" Stalinist histories of the Brigades.

The Brigades were riven by competing national prejudices, and also often displayed chauvinist attitudes towards the indigenous Spanish. In early 1938 all Communist Party

members in the Brigades were therefore ordered to join the Spanish Communist Party, to make them subject to its discipline.

And prior to repatriation, assessments of each Brigader were carried out by leading Communist Party members in the Brigades. The assessments were then sent to the relevant national Communist Party. Frequently, they do not make for pleasant reading.

Other archived material makes clear that members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) battalion in Spain were being "set up" as fascist collaborators in preparation for Moscow-style show trials, in which the ILP would be in the dock alongside their co-thinkers in the POUM.

Hence the incongruity of Glasgow commemorating the International Brigades with a statue of "La Pasionaria". Ibarruri — the object of a Stalinist cult in her own right — vigorously advocated the physical liquidation of antifascists who shared the politics of Glasgow's ILP tradition.

Far better, the pamphlet concludes, if the labour movement in Glasgow — and not just in Glasgow — were to commemorate the International Brigades with statues to the likes of Alexander Marcowich. Marcowich was an antifascist, an anti-Stalinist, and a product of the Jewish-socialist traditions of the early-twentieth-century Gorbals.

Denounced in his archived file as "Very bad. Disrupter. Trotskyist. Dangerous", it was Brigaders like Marcowich who represented what was best in the International Brigades.

Make Labour reinstate the NHS!

This month student nurses and junior doctors are taking up the fight to save the National Health Service. At the end of the month, on 30 January, a "Health Campaigns Together" conference, backed by the Unite and Unison trade unions, meets in London.

The campaign for the NHS Reinstatement Bill drafted by Allyson Pollock has been boosted by the Corbyn surge in the Labour Party, with a regular page on the campaign's website now reporting on support from local Labour Parties.

One issue is funds. The Tories say they aren't cutting the NHS, but they are. They cover up by claiming that the missing billions are "efficiency savings".

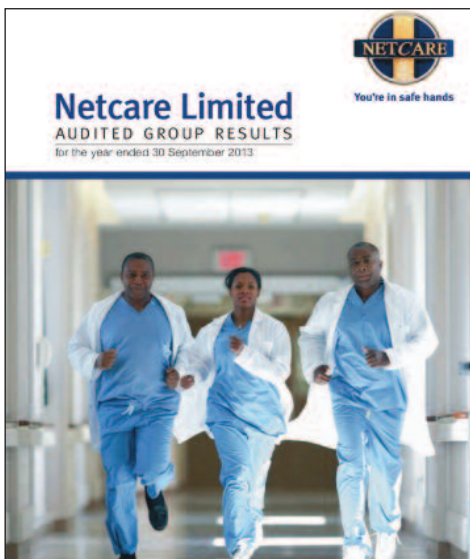
An ageing population and more new treatments, expensive at first, mean that a standstill in NHS cash translates into cuts in real terms.

Another issue is the knock-on from the Tories' huge cuts in local government funding. Councils have cut social care. Elderly patients well enough to leave hospital but not well enough to manage on their own get stuck in hospital, and that leaves fewer hospital resources for other patients.

A third issue is creeping NHS privatisation. When the Tories and Lib-Dems passed the Health and Social Care Act in 2012, health expert Allyson Pollock declared: "The Act effectively reduces the NHS to a funding stream and a logo. Behind the logo, corporations bid for health contracts in a regulated market".

The Tories protest that still only 6% of the NHS budget goes to private firms. The Kings Fund reckons that about 9% of the total NHS budget is spent on non-NHS providers excluding dentistry, medicines, and general practice (not all "non-NHS" is private).

The private sector still leaves basic and difficult health care to the NHS, and for now mostly picks up easier stuff on the edges. It's a lot of smaller contracts.



Netcare private health care business was paid £35.1 million for patients it didn't treat.

Private firms have been winning 40% of contracts that GPs' "clinical commissioning groups" put out to tender, worth a total of £2.3bn, only slightly fewer than the 41% awarded to NHS bodies.

According to the Kings Fund, in acute care commissioners spent about £14 million less in real terms on non-NHS providers in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12.

But in community health services the private-sector proportion increased from 12 per cent in 2010/11 to 18 per cent in 2012/13.

Private-sector mental health providers raked in 12 per cent more between 2010/11 and 2012/13, while spending on NHS mental health fell 2.5 per cent in real terms over the same period.

The contracting-out process does harm even when a public-sector provider wins. In December "UnitingCare Partnership", a consortium of local NHS trusts, pulled out of the

contract it had won only eight months before to provide NHS care for elderly patients in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. It said, in effect, that it had cost-cut so much to win the contract that it couldn't deliver it.

Allyson Pollock writes: "There is mounting evidence that the English NHS is paying for work regardless of whether it is done or not: with one contract, Netcare did not perform nearly 40% of the work it had been contracted to do, receiving £35.1 million for patients it never treated."

"The English NHS is on a track towards the US system, where commercialisation results in around \$750 billion wasted each year due to overtreatment, undertreatment, and billing, invoicing, and marketing costs".

The NHS can still be reinstated. But contracting-out is siphoning off its life bit by bit.

With its new leadership, the Labour Party can and must be turned round and turned outwards, to campaigning on the streets for the NHS and pledging unequivocally to reinstate a Health Service based on social provision for need, not market mechanisms.

- www.nhsbill.org
- www.healthcampaignstogether.com

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Without help from Murray

The Unite union helped with resources for Jeremy Corbyn's campaign for Labour leader, and by all accounts Unite's leaders are influential with the team round Corbyn.

So a long article by Unite "chief of staff" Andrew Murray about Corbyn's Labour, first published on the web in mid-October and widely circulated since, deserves analysis.

It's an odd article, written in the style of a jaded but worldly-wise oracle addressing young devotees. And vague when it gets to the point.

It castigates Blair-Brown "New Labour" at length, chides Ed Miliband's weakness, and observes that battles inside the Labour Party are now central to left politics. Then it gets to how to consolidate Corbyn's victory in face of hostility from the parliamentary Labour Party, from the media, and from the ruling class.

Murray advocates "a measured and radical approach to economic transformation". Who would wish for a haphazard and conservative one? Murray is bland even when regretting that Jeremy Corbyn has (rightly in our view) committed himself to opposing British exit from the EU.

Most interesting is what's missing.

The article says nothing about Corbyn's Labour, or the Momentum movement launched by some of the Corbyn team, campaigning on the streets, to mobilise and to convince people.

NHS

It mentions the Tories' new laws restricting trade unions, but makes no proposal to mobilise Labour's new members to campaign against them. Or for the NHS. Or for public ownership and democratic control of high finance, which is TUC policy.

It mentions "restoring a greater measure to democracy to the Party", but says nothing about what measure. And why only a measure? Why not just democracy? To make a democratic, policy-making, debate-rich Labour conference the decisive authority, and require all Labour's old-regime "chiefs of staff" to follow the democratic mandate or step aside, is crucial.

So is creating space for an open, democratic, lively Young Labour and Labour Students movements. (The existing heavily-controlled Young Labour and Labour Students structures make real life difficult).

He says "wait and see" about the Momentum movement, but nothing about letting it develop a democratic structure and a campaigning profile, as it must.

Looks like Corbyn supporters who want to press ahead on those fronts will have to do it without help from Murray.

Murray has been chief of staff of the Unite union since 2011. Although theoretically he is an appointed functionary responsible for backroom organisation, rather than a person elected by union members to represent them, he has moved motions for Unite at the TUC, sat on the TUC General Council (though he is not there now), and spoken to the press on behalf of the union.

He is also an avowed admirer of the supposed "socialism" of the old USSR and a member of the Communist Party of Britain. He is a long-time leader of the Stop The War Coalition, which gained credit for organising big marches against the US invasion of Iraq but more recently has responded to Ukraine by pointedly not opposing Russia's war and to Syria by implicitly backing Assad.



Savage, bloody and pointless

One hundred years ago, on 9 January 1915, Allied armed forces finally left Turkey's Gallipoli peninsula, defeated. In the eight months since the Gallipoli campaign had started, 87,000 Turkish troops had been killed, alongside 10,000 French, 21,200 British and Irish, 1,300 Indians, 8,700 Australians and 2,700 New Zealanders (the last two together known as the Anzacs). Including the injured, there were nearly 400,000 casualties.

Janine Booth describes what happened at Gallipoli. Part two will be published in *Solidarity* 389.

The First World War was into its second year when Britain attacked the Dardanelles strait, a narrow passage of sea in the eastern Mediterranean overlooked by the Gallipoli peninsula.

The area, part of modern-day Turkey, was then part of the Ottoman empire, which after 600 years was falling apart, known as the "sick man of Europe". The rising power of Germany and the existing empires of Britain, Tsarist Russia and Austria-Hungary wanted to grab what they could from the Ottoman rubble. Their rivalries and manoeuvring intensified. A secret deal in 1908 agreed that Russia could have Constantinople (now Istanbul) if Britain could have the Ottoman province of Iraq.

The Ottoman empire was governed from Constantinople. In 1908, the Party of Union and Progress overthrew Sultan Abdul Hamad, bringing to power the "Young Turks", led by Enver Pasha, Talat and Kemal Mustafa.

When the War began at the start of August 1914, the Ottoman empire was not part of it. It might have remained neutral, or it might have joined with either side, according to its leaders' calculations of potential benefit. While Germany courted Ottoman support, Britain made arrogant diplomatic blunders, and three months into the war, the Ottoman empire joined on the German side. On 6 November, Britain invaded Basra (then Ot-



Lancashire Fusiliers on their way to Gallipoli, May 1915

toman, now in Iraq) to seize control of the oil fields. It was becoming clearer what the war was really about.

AIMING FOR THE STRAITS

Russian Tsar Nicholas suggested to Britain that it could distract the Ottoman empire by engaging Turkey in battle in the eastern Mediterranean. Lord Kitchener (Secretary of State for War) and Winston Churchill (First Lord of the Admiralty) liked the idea: they would force the Dardanelles strait and capture Constantinople.

Most British military leaders, though, thought the plan was daft: Britain had little knowledge of the area or the Turkish enemy, and the terrain was unsuitable, with hills overlooking narrow straits that were far easier to defend than to attack. But Churchill went ahead regardless because it suited his political ambitions.

According to socialist newspaper *The Herald*, "With insouciant flippancy... [Churchill] bade us prepare for a most decisive and momentous development of the war by the conquest of the Gallipoli Peninsula."

On 3 November, Churchill ordered the Navy to bombard the outer forts on the Dardanelles coastline. This alerted the Ottomans to the prospect of an attack, so they spent the next three months preparing their military defence: laying mines, installing heavy weaponry and searchlights, increasing the number of troops sixfold.

Following further bombardments in February 1915, Churchill began the naval campaign on 18 March by sending ships up the Dardanelles straits, attempting to force through a seaway only one mile wide. Turkish mines sank three Allied ships and the fleet withdrew. Churchill was undeterred, taking the view that it mattered little if these ships were lost because they were "old and useless". He said little of the people on board, who were neither.

On 25 April, Allied forces landed on six beaches on the Gallipoli peninsula. Some landed on the wrong beaches, having drifted a mile north of their target in the dark.

Some men were shot dead as they sat in the

boats taking them ashore, some as they waded towards the beach. The sea was red with their blood for 50 metres out from the shore. Witnesses spoke of unbearable crying of wounded and dying men. There were over 2,000 Anzac casualties, 2,000 Turkish.

The landings held, but troops did not advance onto the peninsula as planned. They did not have enough ammunition, and the military goal of capturing Constantinople was less achievable than ever. But their leaders ordered the much-reduced force to stay put.

Sir Ian Hamilton was in overall charge, commanding the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force. He believed that the British would win because they were superior to the Turks. The commander of the British 29th Division, which landed at Cape Helles, was Major-General Aylmer Hunter-Weston, who ignored requests for reinforcements and ammunition. Australian Gallipoli historian Les Carlyon writes that Hunter-Weston "threw away troops the way lesser men tossed away socks ... without imagination or pity." His misleadership at Gallipoli would show him as the caricature of the bumbling British general.

BATTLES AND TRENCHES

Three days after the landings, the Allies made their first attempt to advance from the beaches. The First Battle of Krithia was under-resourced and poorly planned: the French commander, Albert d'Amade, was confused about his role, and nobody was certain where the Turkish front line actually was.

Shortly after, the Second Battle of Krithia saw Hunter-Weston run the same battle strategy three times, even though it kept failing. There were no wagons to carry the wounded from the dressing station to the beach, so many died who might have lived. There were 6,500 Allied casualties, nearly one third of the men, but nowhere had the Allies advanced more than 600 yards.

The campaign was already a trench-bound war of attrition. One side would attack, the other would fight them off. Thousands would die, more would be injured, but only a few yards would change hands. It was savage, bloody, pointless. On the hospital ship *Gascon*, Nurse Kitchen described it in her diary as "a dreadful war ... more like wholesale murder". Some were so badly injured they were sent home, only to face destitution, abandoned by the government which had sent them to war. *The Herald* reported the "pitiable story" of a man who fought at Gallipoli and was discharged with rheumatism: with a wife and 3 kids to support, he received a pension of just 4s8d per week, for 18 months only.

Private Ernest Law also kept a diary, writing on 6 May of charging out of the trench with his fellow soldiers "under heavy machine gun fire, some of them was hit before they could get over the top. It was terrible going across the open - was at it until dusk and suffered heavy losses." On 12 June, "Dropping shells about our trench all day. The 5th [Lancashire Fusiliers] was coming

Gallipoli

By Janine Booth

Rank corpses carpeted Gallipoli
At Russell's Top, Lone Pine and Suvla Bay
By bullet, bayonet or dysentery
Eight months of folly fighting lives away
Young Albert Booth got out of there alive
From hell to hell, from Dardanelles to trench
No others from his landing craft survived
But joined the dead, the ANZACS, Turks and French
One hundred thousand gone from those sad nations
And all for what? A great futility
Did lives not figure in the calculations
Of Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty?
Excuse me if I don't take out a sub
To Winston Churchill's great admirers' club

25 April 2015



Albert Henry Booth, Janine's grandfather, who fought at Gallipoli



Allied troops in the trenches at Gallipoli

out of the firing line and one of them got his head clean blown off by one of the Turks” shells about three yards away from me.”

Churchill’s brother Jack, a Staff Officer, wrote to him just two weeks after the first landing, telling him that it was stalemate trench warfare. But still he carried on.

Three weeks into the land campaign, the British War Council discussed the situation.

Bound by the upper-class nonsense about not giving bad news to superiors, Hamilton made out to Kitchener that things were not so bad. Instead of discontinuing the operation, it was continued and reshuffled. Churchill was moved away from the Admiralty to the Duchy of Lancaster. Lord Fisher resigned his position as First Sea Lord when his demand that the operation be discontinued was overruled, and was replaced by Sir Henry Jackson. On 24 May, despite his litany of failure so far, Hunter-Weston was promoted.

ONE-DAY ARMISTICE

On 24 May, both sides’ leaders agreed a pause to bury the dead soldiers. This was not an act of respect or ceremony, but because the thousands of corpses were rotting, swelling, stinking, and attracting millions of flies and rampant disease.

In the words of Scottish-born Australian Eric Bogle’s song “And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda”, “We buried ours, and the Turks buried theirs, then we started all over again.” A Turkish captain wrote that: “At this spectacle even the most gentle must feel savage, and the most savage must weep.”

But when the Turks later requested a similar armistice, Hamilton refused. As June turned to July, Turkish battalions carried out a series of suicidal counter-attacks after slight Allied advances, and Hamilton hoped to benefit from Turkish soldiers’ unwillingness to charge over fallen friends’ corpses.

Turkish army leaders, under the command of the German Von Sanders, also made mis-

takes, and also sent their own soldiers, many of whom were conscripts, to certain slaughter, for example in a May 19 attack on Anzac lines.

The 57th infantry led the charge for Turkey and the Ottoman empire, but not a single man survived the war. Their commander, Mustafa Kemal, told his men that he was ordering them not to fight but to die – they would be replaced. Before the attack on the Dardanelles, in January 1915, Enver Pasha took command of an attack on the Russians and ordered an advance which led to 30,000 Ottoman soldiers freezing to death.

AUGUST OFFENSIVE

Hunter-Weston, claiming poor health, was allowed to leave the campaign in a way no rank-and-file soldier would have been. The new commander was Lieutenant-General Frederick Stopford. In August, the Allies launched a desperate offensive. With reserves arriving, the campaign became bigger on both sides.

The New South Wales Infantry charged Turkish lines on 6 August: W.H. Nevinson wrote in the *Manchester Guardian* (under strict wartime restrictions): “At the word all the first sections rose, climbed the sandbag parapets, and rushed forward across an open space of about sixty yards of rough ground. Our men were at once met by furious rifle fire

and several machine guns at short range.” When they reached the enemy trenches, they found them covered with wooden beams, and the Turks shot them from below until they made holes in the improvised roof and jumped down into the trenches for hand-to-hand fighting.

The next day, new Allied landings went badly. Bogle’s narrator sings: “And how well I remember that terrible day, how our blood stained the sand and the water, And how in that hell that they called Suvla Bay, we were butchered like lambs at the slaughter.”

At the same time, the Anzacs attacked a ridge called the Nek. Commander of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade Colonel Frederic Hughes ordered a bayonet charge doomed to failure against weapons developed fifty years earlier. Most of the first and second wave of men died within three paces of going over the top. Hughes’ brigade officer Lieutenant-Colonel John Antill refused a request to cancel the third wave and ordered the men to “Push on!” Hughes’ decision to call of the fourth wave came too late. Carlyon argues that: “The scale of the tragedy of the Nek was mostly the work of two Australian incompetents, Hughes and Antill.” Hughes went on to be heavily decorated, and retired in 1924 as a honorary major-general.

Allied forces also attacked Lone Pine in an attempt to break out from positions and

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Timeline

- 3 November 1914: Naval bombardment of Dardanelles forts
- 5 November: Turkey joined the War on the German side
- 19 February 1915: Naval bombardment of the Straits forts began
- 18 March: Naval attempt to force the Straits; Turkish arrest of 250 leading Armenians begins the Armenian genocide
- 25 April: Landings at Cape Helles and Anzac Cove
- 28 April: First Battle of Krithia
- 2 May: Turkish counter-attack
- 6 May: Second Battle of Krithia
- 14 May: War Council
- 24 May: Armistice to bury dead
- 4 June: Third Battle of Krithia
- 28 June: Battle of Gully Ravine
- 30 June: Failed assault on Russell’s Top
- 3 August: Allied reserves landed
- 6 August: Offensive began
- 7 August: Landings at Suvla Bay; charge on the Nek
- 8-10 August: Chunuk Bair hill briefly captured by Allies
- 9 August: Attack on Hill Q
- 21-22 August: Battle of Scimitar Hill; attack on Hill 60
- 14 October: Dardanelles Committee sacked Hamilton
- 15 November: Churchill resigned from government
- 22 November: Kitchener recommended a partial evacuation
- 27 November: three-day storm; hundreds killed
- 7 December: Cabinet decided to evacuate Suvla and Anzac
- 18-19 December: Anzac and Suvla evacuated
- 28 December: Cabinet authorised evacuation of Helles
- 9 January 1916: Evacuation completed

make progress along the peninsula. But with the military commanders having poor communications, the result was not a breakout, but loads of dead men on both sides.

The first four days of August offensive saw 25,000 Allied casualties. The operation had failed. But Hamilton had an absurd romantic notion about regaining lost ground and pressing on, and kept sending men to their deaths. Stopford did not even go ashore, and objected to being woken up to be told of problems with landings. Ten days into the doomed and disastrous offensive, he was sacked and replaced by General Julian Byng.

By this time, the Allies had attacked various hills, either failing to capture them or holding them briefly only to be easily picked off. On Hill Q, the Allied troops were mistakenly shelled by an Allied gunship.

Nevinson, who had been a socialist activist in East London before becoming a war journalist, wrote: “The slopes of the ridges here bear terrible witness to the intensity of the fighting. The dead lay thick everywhere and the stench is appalling.”

The command knew that it could not win anything more than a few yards of territory, but this at least gave them the opportunity to send good news to Kitchener.

In the ruling class’s sick dictionary, “thousands of working-class men dead, ten yards gained” was “good news”.

A service for scholars and activists

By Paul Le Blanc

With the publication of two fat volumes of documents under the heading *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*, edited by Sean Matgamna, *Workers' Liberty* has performed a genuine service for scholars and activists.

In a sense, we are presented with three books in the guise of two, with the editor producing introductions of 156 pages in the first volume and 125 pages (including timeline and glossary) in the second. This “book” of 281 pages advances a line of argument that champions the perspectives of Max Shachtman, a US associate of Leon Trotsky who broke with him in 1940.

The 790-page second installment, *The Two Trotskyisms Confront Stalinism*, deals with the contending views within the US Trotskyist movement 1940s, specifically, those aligned with Trotsky and James P. Cannon in the Socialist Workers Party, and those aligned with Shachtman in what became (for a while) the Workers Party.

The previous volume is actually entitled *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*, and basically presents the views of Shachtman and the current he led during the 1940s, and early 1950s. A “slimmer” volume, it weighs in at slightly over 600 pages. It was actually published as Volume 1 of *Lost Texts of Critical Marxism*, an overarching banner that seems to have been dropped.

There are some who, for whatever reasons, do not think there is much (or any) importance to such history, and have expressed the view that the publication of these volumes is ridiculous. It is certainly true that poring through old left-wing documents from the 1930s and 1940s is not something that most people are inclined (or in a position) to do. But to deny that there is anything useful to learn from such excavations and explorations is inconsistent with a serious attitude toward the discipline of history, as well as toward political theory, not to mention Marxism. What's more, the materials by Shachtman and his comrades are packed with interesting ideas, useful information, and sometimes delicious humour. For some of us, at least, they are well worth looking at.

CAPABLE

There are others who complain that the two volumes are skewed to favour the Shachtmanite orientation, and they certainly are.

But there is hardly anything wrong with that, because the very purpose of these works is to make the case for the Shachtman orientation. If Sean Matgamna didn't feel a passion for this perspective — which he advocates in the very capable polemic that constitutes the “third book” — these volumes would never have been produced at all.

Writing a capable polemic does not necessarily mean writing a persuasive polemic.

For example, I am not persuaded that the ideas and the very nature of Shachtman's Trotskyist opponents — James P. Cannon and others in the Socialist Workers Party — are adequately characterised or dealt with either by Shachtman or Matgamna. It can certainly be argued that, over the long haul, their organisation held up better than that of Shachtman, their political orientation proved in some ways less disastrous (avoiding Shachtman's Cold War anti-Communism of the 1960s — instead organising an effective movement against the US war in Vietnam), and their theoretical orientation continues to



Leon Trotsky

have much to recommend it.

It is this last point that I want to focus on in the remainder of these comments. As the framework, we must naturally turn our attention to the analysis Shachtman contended with — that developed by Trotsky. As Matgamna correctly emphasises: “Trotsky constantly rethought, reconceptualised, readjusted his thinking on the USSR as on other issues.” This is amply demonstrated in Thomas M Twiss's remarkable new study, *Trotsky and the Problem of Soviet Bureaucracy* (Haymarket Books, 2015), which traces the evolution of Trotsky's analyses and theorisations from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s, replete with brilliant insights blended with false starts, misperceptions compelling subsequent corrections, and the evolution of a deepening understanding of complex realities. The culmination was the 1936-37 classic *The Revolution Betrayed*.

The Revolution Betrayed covered a broad array of economic, social, political, and cultural issues. Trotsky went on to argue that the Soviet state and society were fluid, transitional, and could not be defined by “finished social categories” such as capitalism or socialism. Capitalism was governed by profit-driven market relations, an accumulation process, inconsistent with the actual dynamics of the USSR. Socialism could not be reduced to a state-owned economy with top-down centralized planning in a single country, even one as large as the USSR — it required genuine democracy and global scope to be viable and consistent with a Marxist understanding of socialism. Instead, Trotsky offered this complex characterisation:

The Soviet Union is a contradictory society halfway between capitalism and socialism, in which: (a) the productive forces are still far from adequate to give the state property a socialist character; (b) the tendency toward primitive accumulation created by want breaks out through innumerable pores of the planned economy; (c) norms of distribution preserving a bourgeois character lie at the basis of a new differentiation of society; (d) the economic growth, while slowly bettering the situation of the toilers, promotes a swift formation of privileged strata; (e) exploiting the social antagonisms, a bureaucracy has converted itself into an uncontrolled caste alien to socialism; (f) the social revolution, betrayed by the ruling party, still exists in property relations and in the consciousness of the toiling masses; (g) a further development of

the accumulating contradictions can as well lead to socialism as back to capitalism; (h) on the road to capitalism the counterrevolution would have to break the resistance of the workers; (i) on the road to socialism the workers would have to overthrow the bureaucracy.

In the last analysis, the question will be decided by a struggle of living social forces, both on the national and the world arena.

Trotsky believed that “only hypotheses are possible” regarding future developments beyond this transitional stage. One possibility was the eventual restoration of capitalism — which, in fact, is what finally happened. He had genuine hopes, however, that the struggles of “living social forces,” including in the Soviet Union, would move forward toward socialism in the foreseeable future.

Concluding that “the bureaucracy can be removed only by a revolutionary force,” Trotsky noted that “to prepare this and stand at the head of the masses in a favourable historic situation” would be “the task of the Soviet section of the Fourth International.” He admitted that “today it is still weak and driven underground,” but added that “the illegal existence of a party is not nonexistence.”

PROBLEMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

This key assumption was to become almost immediately problematic with the onset of what the late historian Vadim Rogovin termed “political genocide” — Stalin's 1937-38 slaughter of old Bolsheviks, and of the majority of Trotskyists who were machine-gunned in the gulags.

A case can be made that a failure to adequately factor this horrific fact into his subsequent analyses and theorisations introduced an element of unreality into what Trotsky had to say about the political revolution he advocated. But it is worth giving serious consideration, nonetheless, to what he meant by “political revolution.”

Believing that the political revolution he called for must not substitute one ruling clique with another, Trotsky insisted that “bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy,” and he offered details on what this would look like. Full freedom of speech and genuinely free elections, with not only a democratisation of the Bolshevik party but also the freedom for other parties to exist in the re-democratised Soviets, would all be crucial, as would the revival of the trade unions. “The bringing of democracy into industry means a radical revision of plans in the interests of the toilers.

Free discussion of economic problems will decrease the overhead expense of bureaucratic mistakes and zigzags.” Bureaucratic privileges and high-budget “show-off” projects would make way for a more equitable sharing of the social wealth, with decent housing and other social needs being prioritized. “The youth will receive the opportunity to breathe freely, criticize, make mistakes, and grow up. Science and art will be freed of their chains.” And naturally, “foreign policy will return to the traditions of revolutionary internationalism.”

Trotsky believed that such a political revolution could free the nationalised, planned economy — flowing from the conquests of the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 — from the authoritarian-bureaucratic stranglehold that would otherwise kill it. The Bolsheviks, had led the successful struggle to give all power to the soviets, the democratic workers' councils, thereby creating a workers state, which

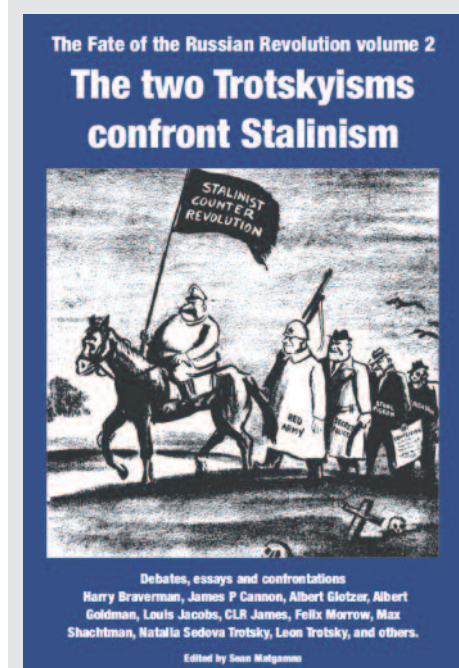
had begun the transition from capitalism to socialism. The bureaucratically-degenerated workers' state must be replaced by the re-establishment of a genuinely democratic workers state.

What Max Shachtman and others have insisted upon is that the loss of political power by the working class makes Trotsky's insistent characterisation of the USSR as any kind of a workers' state incredibly problematic. Combine this with the physical elimination of the forces in the USSR that might have been capable of leading the political revolution for which Trotsky and his co-thinkers were calling, and we seem to have entered a theoretical and political cul-de-sac.

Shachtman concluded that the Stalinist bureaucracy was a far more stable formation than Trotsky wanted to believe. Following James Burnham (who later became a right-wing ideologue, and whose importance Matgamna goes out of his way to minimize) and Joseph Carter, Shachtman concluded that what had crystallised was a new form of class society — unanticipated in Marxist theory. This new class society was tagged as bureaucratic-collectivism, which Shachtman saw as no better, no less exploitative, no more progressive than capitalism.

Within two decades he partially followed Burnham's trajectory, seeing this new tyranny as much worse, far more exploitative, far less progressive than capitalism. He then joined Cold War anti-Communists who saw the power of the capitalist United States (whose imperialist foreign policy Shachtman had been denouncing over four decades) as the strongest bulwark against the totalitarian menace.

In addition to Trotsky's and Shachtman's approaches, there is the alternate theoretical construct of “state capitalism” — that is, seeing what developed in the USSR as simply a new variant of capitalism, with the bureaucratic state functioning as the “capitalist” that extracts surplus-value from the still-exploited proletariat. Different variants of this theoretical approach were developed by the “council communists” associated with Anton Pannekoek, Otto Rühle, Paul Mattick, and others; by the Johnson-Forest Tendency and its successors associated with CLR James and Raya Dunayevskaya; and by Tony Cliff and



Second edition now out, 798 pages, £23 including postage. E-book versions now available at bit.ly/2t-eb

others associated with the International Socialists and British Socialist Workers Party.

In 1948 Cliff forecast Shachtman's trajectory: "If the Stalinist regime denotes the decline of civilization, the reactionary negation of capitalism, then it is of course more reactionary than the latter. Capitalism has to be defended from Stalinist barbarism" (Tony Cliff, "The Theory of Bureaucratic Collectivism: A Critique," *Selected Writings* [London: Bookmarks, 2003], 160). Partisans of the state-capitalist theory, no less than those of the degenerated workers state perspective, have seen bureaucratic-collectivism as facilitating a fatal accommodation between would-be Marxist revolutionaries and actually-existing capitalism.

Shachtman's 1940s articulation of the theory of bureaucratic-collectivism, however, does not inevitably lead to an alignment with the foreign policy of US imperialism.

Among the partisans of the theory who did not abandon revolutionary politics are Julius and Phyllis Jacobson, Hal Draper, and others who produced the journal *New Politics*, various comrades associated with the US group *Solidarity*, etc. No less important than the revolutionary honor of such partisans, however, is the theory's value for what some of us call scientific socialism — a commitment to struggling for socialism that is grounded in a serious utilisation of what are today the disciplines of history, economics, sociology and political science. Bureaucratic-collectivism certainly has value as a descriptive term — the economy is collectivised (not a market economy) but is dominated and ruled by an authoritarian regime representing a privileged and powerful bureaucratic apparatus. But what Shachtman meant by "bureaucratic-collectivism" was more than that.

CLASS

The apparatus was seen as a socio-economic class, similar to the slave-owning patricians of ancient Rome, the hereditary aristocracy of feudal times, and the capitalists of our own day. Similarly, bureaucratic-collectivism was presented as a new form of class society.

From our own historical vantage-point, the roughly fifty-year existence of this purportedly "new stage of class society" does suggest the possibility that Shachtman and his comrades were experiencing an optical illusion. As Trotsky argued, it was all much more transitory than they believed (although certainly less transitory than Trotsky himself had anticipated).

Marcel van der Linden, in his excellent survey of contending theories, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union* (Haymarket Books, 2009), has noted that "it is perfectly clear that the Soviet society can hardly be explained in orthodox Marxist terms at all." In examining the predominant theoretical variants — (1) degenerated workers state, (b) bureaucratic-collectivism, and (3) state capitalism — he concludes that a fully adequate analysis of the USSR has yet to be developed. He adds that this does "not mean to imply that the old theories are of no use whatever in further theoretical developments," suggesting (correctly, in my opinion) that each approach has, in fact, proved capable of generating valuable insights and analyses.

To the extent that this is true, and that the materials in these volumes also provide valuable primary sources on the important history of US and world Trotskyism, those committed to a truly scientific socialism in efforts to understand and change the world should see the publication of these volumes as a positive contribution.

• Paul Le Blanc is a long-time Trotskyist; an historian; author of a recent biography of Trotsky; and a member of the US International Socialist Organization.



A celebration of materialism and war?

What's wrong with Star Wars?

By Eric Lee

Socialists begin our understanding of culture with Marx's oft-quoted comments about the ruling ideas of an age being the ideas of the ruling class.

Living under capitalism, we understand that just as we are critical of the structure of the society we live in, and the behaviour of its ruling class, so we are also critical of its cultural and intellectual production.

There are few cultural products that have been shared as widely as the Star Wars films. Seven films made over the course of nearly four decades have been seen by millions, possibly hundreds of millions, of people. As socialists, we should have something to say about this.

Some people would stop right there. It's just a bit of entertainment, just some fun. Not to be taken seriously. Certainly not worthy of a critique.

I disagree. Marx, Trotsky and other socialists wrote extensively about culture, art and literature. Trotsky was acutely aware of the importance of film and wrote about it, among other places, in his short book, *Problems of Life*.

Like millions of other people, I went to see the latest Star Wars film over the Christmas break. Let me start off by saying that it is massive improvement over the three previous films (the prequels known as episodes I – III) and that the special effects are, as was to be expected, spectacular. That's not much of a compliment, as the prequels were generally seen as disastrous.

Fans waited eagerly for director JJ Abrams to rescue the series, which he has now done. And the effects, while impressive, don't have the same shock value as those of the original 1977 film. Then, we were seeing things we'd never seen before.

In the current film, we're seeing just more of them. And they are bigger.

Having said that, let's try to look at the film critically. The moment one does so, certain things become obvious, and none of them are very good.

The Star Wars films, including the newest one, are celebrations of militarism and war. Nearly all the characters wear uniforms and carry weapons. The weapons are vastly more powerful than anything available today, and include the capacity to destroy entire planets.

With such enormously powerful weapons, far greater numbers of people are killed in a few minutes in a Star Wars film than have died in any wars we have experienced in human history.

BOTHERED

And yet the films seem not to be too bothered about this.

In the first film (Episode IV), when an entire planet is destroyed, one character says "I felt a great disturbance in the Force, as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, and were suddenly silenced. I fear something terrible has happened."

But in the latest film, when several planets are destroyed one after another, no one expresses any such feeling. The only comment made is that the enemy is getting closer to the rebel base and must be defeated. Millions have died in an instant, but the "disturbance in the Force" is no longer felt.

This casual approach to death is linked to Star Wars' approach to religion. To the extent to which anyone in the Star Wars universe holds religious beliefs, they believe in The Force. The Force has a dark side and a light side, but it is not entirely clear why one is a force for good and the other a force for evil. Take away the mood music and the evil-looking black costumes, and the two

sides seem mirror images of each other.

The religion of Star Wars makes no pretence of being a code of ethics or morality; no one does anything because it is the right thing to do. Neither side seems to care in the slightest about taking the lives of millions on the other side.

Both sides are despotisms — one ruled by an Emperor (and in the current film, Supreme Leader Snoke), the other ruled by a Princess (now General). While the earlier Star Wars films made reference to a republic, and even showed a kind of parliament, there is nothing of the sort in the current film. There are just warlords on each side, each commanding their uniformed fighters, sending them to their deaths in an endless conflict that has now gone on for decades, if not centuries.

The script for the new film is derivative and unoriginal. As critics and fans have pointed out, there are plot holes large enough to fly the Millennium Falcon through. The film seems clearly aimed at children, and yet Disney has successfully marketed it to adults as well. As a commercial product, Star Wars is a great success.

Science fiction doesn't have to be this way. We can imagine other worlds, other futures, that don't insult our intelligence or celebrate militarism, genocide, autocracy and the worst forms of faux-religious mumbo-jumbo.

Harrison Ford, who plays Han Solo in the current film as he did in the first three, starred in just such an intelligent film when he played Deckard in *Blade Runner*. That film raised important questions about what it means to be human. Deaths in that film — even the deaths of replicants who were not human — were done on a human scale, one at a time, and each one painful and tragic.

That is what great science fiction looks like. Not Star Wars.

Where we stand



Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth, causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite together in solidarity to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace, and wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with its "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
 - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
 - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
 - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
 - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
 - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
 - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
 - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
 - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
 - If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Upcoming events

Saturday 9 January — Save NHS Bursaries demonstration, 12pm, St Thomas' Hospital, London SE1 7EH — bit.ly/NHsbursary

Wednesday 13 January — Fate of the Russian Revolution reading group (London), 6pm, WC1H 0AY — bit.ly/fatereading

Thursday 14 January — GMB celebrates Eleanor Marx, 7pm, GMB headquarters, London NW1 2HD — bit.ly/eleanormarx

Thursday 21 January — Workers' Liberty London Forum, Syria: War and Solidarity, 7pm, Indian YMCA, W1T 6AQ bit.ly/syriasol

Saturday 30 January — Health Campaigns Together conference, 10.30am, London Welsh Centre, WC1X 8UE — bit.ly/NHScnf

Saturday 27 February — Stop Trident National Demonstration, 12pm, London — bit.ly/stoptrident

**Have an event that you want us to list?
Email solidarity@workersliberty.org**

More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Turning Labour outwards

LABOUR

Clive Lewis, MP for Norwich South, spoke to *Solidarity*.

Do you agree with the Shadow Chancellor that it would be desirable to overthrow capitalism?

I am a democratic socialist. But there are as many definitions of socialism as there are of capitalism. I think the neo-liberal version of capitalism is a world away from the post-war capitalism that we had in the 50s and 60s. Do I want to see an end to neoliberalism and this version of capitalism? Yes.

Do I think that there is a role for capitalism in the future? Well, I happen to be a pragmatist. I don't think there is an appetite in our democratically-elected system, at the moment, for complete destruction of capitalism.

McDonnell is not talking about the overthrow of capitalism, he's talking about making capitalism work better for more people in a fairer, more effective way.

The right want to take us into a dark, dystopian future in this country and we are offering a democratic, socialist way forward that can make our economy and society a better place. I don't see that as being incompatible with capitalism. Who knows where we'll be in 40, 50, 60 years?

What should the relationship be between the Parliamentary Labour Party and Party members? Do you think the free vote over Syria was the right thing to do in light of Labour's conference policy?

There is a divide between some members of the PLP and the centre of gravity within the membership, and we need to think about how to square that circle.

On Syria, did Corbyn make the wrong call in giving members a free vote? No. I think he should have done it sooner. I understand the dilemma. We had a policy. People within the PLP interpreted the policy differently. Some people thought that the caveats had been met, others didn't.

During the original vote on operations in Iraq, Corbyn said that matters of war are matters of political conscience. I think he was spot on. I think the Tories are wrong on this too — you shouldn't whip, you should vote with your conscience. It's a massive issue to send people to war, to do damage, potentially to kill people.

I understand some people think he should have whipped and I understand why he might have been tempted to do that, thinking, what's the point of being Leader, standing on a platform of having a very different foreign intervention policy, if I can't stop my party from voting to bomb?

MPs are not only responsible to their membership, they are also responsible to their constituents. And many MPs would say that their

constituents thought they were doing the right thing.

Look at Corbyn over the Blair years. He often voted with his conscience, with what he thought were true Labour, socialist values.

There have been a number of expulsions of left-wingers from the Party. What do you think of this? Is there a place for Marxists in Labour?

I won't comment on individual cases, because those will be dealt with by a formal process and we have to have confidence in that. As for your second question, if you can be a Marxist and hold the democratic values and principles of the Labour Party, then yes, of course I see no problem with.

What democratic changes and reforms are needed in Labour?

Without getting into specifics, what we have seen in our party over the last 20 years is a system that has become more centralised, more top-down. A big part of Jeremy's campaign was about opening up the Labour Party to the membership, giving them more say in the positions and the policy of the party. Not just making sure that annual conference can be the primary, sovereign democratic forum for deciding what policy is, but also the National Policy Forum.

I think that anything that gives the membership more of a say is a good thing. But that has to be balanced with the ability to run a party in a modern, technocratic democracy, in a way that isn't just going to be complete chaos.

Do you think that being a Labour MP should be a job for life, or is reasonable for Labour MPs, like councillors, to be subject periodically to mandatory reselection?

I don't think mandatory reselection is something I agree with. People might say, "well you're an MP, you would say that". If my CLP is unhappy with me, there is already a process, a trigger ballot process, for them to say, "Clive, we've watched you for the last five years as an MP and we don't want you to be automatically re-selected."

So when I come up for automatic re-selection, they can open it out to other candidates. I think that system is fair. I can understand why that has caused a lot of problems for the Labour Party, with the boundary changes coming up and so on, people are worried about a purge; that's not something I have ever agreed with — we have a difference of opinion on that.

The intense media scrutiny of everything that Momentum does is leading to a sense of paralysis, a reluctance to make decisions or to speak or act boldly or decisively. Do you agree? How do we break out of it?

Momentum is an organisation whose democratic structures have yet to be decided. It's in a transition stage. And I can't answer for Mo-



mentum because I'm not a spokesperson for Momentum. Momentum was not set up as a machine to purge Blairites, to deselect MPs. It wasn't even set up to be an internal group, to focus on the internal mechanisms of the Labour Party.

It was always designed to be an organisation that worked with the Labour Party — it will now be for Labour Party members only — and which campaigned actively, to be involved with community campaigns, campaigns against the abolition of the Human Rights Act, against the Trade Union Bill, to keep the NHS public. Now, people might reasonably say, "why can't your CLP do that?" But the reality is that some CLPs — not all — have become election machines. And rightly so, because we are in the business of winning elections. But there are a lot of people who have come into the Labour Party who also want to be able to do things beyond that.

There are lots of people who supported Corbyn's platform who for whatever reason are not members of the Labour Party. Do you mean to say that these people have no legitimate role in Momentum?

Is there a place in Momentum for the Socialist Party, for the SWP, for parties who have stood and campaigned against Labour and who do not entirely share Labour values? No, there isn't. Momentum is clearly a Labour Party organisation. We might do campaigns, say on the Trade Union Bill, where we have a day of action in the city centre, collecting signatures — we're not going to stop anyone else from getting involved, if we share the same campaign aims. But in terms of the decisions being made inside Momentum, those are for Labour Party members.

Should it not be for Momentum to decide on its own membership policy?

Clearly. And it is not right for the advisory group of Momentum to be in the hands of just a few people. We want it to be in the hands of Labour Party members who are part of Momentum. That's where we should end up.

There is going to be an interim period of six months, and then the people who are involved with Momentum are given a democratic say over Momentum.

Victory for DLR cleaners

By Ollie Moore

Cleaning and security workers on London's Docklands Light Railway (DLR) won a big victory before Christmas, settling a long-running dispute over terms and conditions for a deal that represents a 75p/hour pay increase, backdated to April 2015.

The workers, employed by outsourced subcontractor Interserve, struck several times throughout 2015. An RMT statement called the deal "a massive breakthrough", which "gives some much-needed Christmas cheer to a group of London transport workers who have fought long and hard for pay justice."

The statement continued, "this pay victory proves that low paid workers can get organised into a fighting trade union and use their collective industrial strength to win



DLR cleaners on strike last year

a fair deal in the workplace."

Although under the publicly-owned Transport for London aegis, the DLR is privatised and operated by a consortium of contractors (Kelolis Amey Docklands, KAD). KAD in turn outsources various func-

tions, including cleaning and some security work, to Interserve.

Directly-employed DLR staff are also in dispute with KAD over a variety of issues, and have several strikes planned in the first four months of 2016.

Jobs battle continues on Tube

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT has announced an indefinite overtime ban for station workers on London Underground (LU), as part of its ongoing fight against job cuts and attacks on terms and conditions.

The ban, which began on 3 January, could lead to station closures

and other disruptions, as years of staffing cuts mean that many Tube stations rely on workers doing overtime to remain open.

London Underground plans to impose a new staffing model on stations in 2016, which will see hundreds of jobs lost, most workers re-graded to more responsible roles without any additional pay, and

terms and conditions and contracts unilaterally changed.

The new model (called "Fit for the Future") was first announced in November 2013, since when Tube workers have struck for a total of six days in an attempt to stop it, as well as using other tactics such as overtime bans and revenue strikes. Elements of the changes have already been imposed by Tube bosses, including the closure of all LU-operated ticket offices.

A Tube worker and RMT activist told *Solidarity*: "These changes will make our working lives much more stressful, and seriously affect the service we're able to provide to our passengers. Footfall is going up, so staffing levels and services like ticket offices should be expanding as well, not being cut back."

Supporters of the socialist rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* are arguing for the overtime ban to be supplemented with a ban on higher-grade working, and for a programme of escalating strikes to be announced as soon as possible.

Tube unions also remain in dispute with LU about their 2015 pay settlement, now nine months overdue, and new staffing arrangements to facilitate the introduction of 24-hour running ("Night Tube").



places have left LU managers in no doubt that the RMT is prepared to use its full industrial muscle to defend Glen from victimisation.

RMT gears up to defend Glen Hart

London Underground workers are preparing to ballot for strikes to defend London Underground station supervisor Glen Hart.

London Underground attempted to discipline Glen for closing his station during an RMT overtime ban in 2014, although he had followed railway regulations to the letter. After having to drop these trumped-up charges, they went after Glen on a ludicrous misconduct charge, essentially alleging that he had been rude to a manager... on no other evidence than the testimony of that manager!

A lively demonstration at Clapham Common station in December and a campaign of propaganda across Tube work-



50 Interserve cleaners, London Underground workers of other grades, and supporters protested outside Interserve's London headquarters on 15 December 2015. The protest, organised by the RMT's London Transport Region, demanded that Interserve end its practice of routinely short-paying cleaners, stops job cuts, and ends outsourcing by directly employing agency workers.

No mandate for Prentis!

By Gemma Short

Dave Prentis was re-elected as Unison General Secretary at the end of last year, with less than 50% of the vote, less than 10% turnout, and amid allegations of cheating.

A few days before the ballot closed a recording was leaked that implicated Unison full-time officials in campaigning in favour of Prentis in clear breach of union rules. Both Unison and the Electoral Reform Services failed to declare the result null and void as a result of the full-timers actions.

Calls for an independent investigation, including by a large section of the NEC, were ignored, and instead Unison launched an internal inquiry. That inquiry has claimed that the recording shows signs of having been tampered with, yet does not try to deny any

wrong doing on the part of the full-time officials. Either the full-time officials acted against Unison rules, or they did not!

Despite seemingly having full-time officials publicising him, and Prentis appearing in almost every article in the Union's publications during the election period whilst the election — and other candidates — were not mentioned, Prentis' vote took a huge battering. Since 2010 Prentis has gone from 185,000 votes to 66,000, losing 119,000 votes — two thirds.

This is no real mandate for Prentis to continue to sit back while public sector workers and services are attacked by the government.

• The whistleblower who made the recording has answered allegations that the recording was tampered with. Read the answer at: bit.ly/unisongate

Arriva trains strike

By Ollie Moore

Driver members of both the Aslef and RMT unions working for Arriva Trains Wales struck on Monday 4 January, leading to widespread disruption.

Unions suspended a planned strike in November, but reinstated action after Arriva failed to make a satisfactory offer on pay and conditions.

Aslef organiser Simon Weller said, "The company has not made a new offer. It has sent us a form of words. But it is not new and it is not an offer." RMT General Secretary Mick Cash said, "This strike is

about basic workplace justice and decent working conditions and it is down to the company to recognise the anger amongst the workforce shown this morning and to meet with the unions for genuine and meaningful talks on the issues in dispute."

As well as pay, unions are concerned about how frequently workers will be expected to work past an agreed 9.5 hour shift length, arguing that the wording in the company's current deal (that they will be expected to do so in "special circumstances") is too vague, as Arriva frequently serves events such as football matches.

Momentum on the streets

By Tim Cooper

On Monday 4 January Labour and trade union activists leafleted passengers at train stations across the country on the first working day since rail fare rises of 1.1% were implemented, making them the most expensive in Europe.

The protests were called for by Action for Rail, backed by rail unions and was the first protest of the year that Momentum called for activists to get involved in.

In Nottingham Momentum supporters from Nottingham East, Broxtowe and Sherwood CLPs handed out postcards for passengers to send to their MPs calling for no fare increases.

60 other stations were leafleted including Kings Cross where campaigners were joined by Jeremy Corbyn and the Shadow Minister for Transport Lillian Greenwood.

• To get involved in Momentum in Nottingham contact Tim: tjcooper59@hotmail.com

By Peggy Carter

After striking unofficially in November, library workers in Lambeth have now been given an official ballot by Unison.

Lambeth council plans to shut half of Lambeth libraries, turn three into membership gyms with un-

staffed book stations, and cut up to 25% of library workers' jobs. Unison and local library campaigns have organised marches and protests against the cuts.

One such protest saw campaigners knitting shut the doors of one of Lambeth's council offices on 18 December.

Lambeth librarians balloted



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DOCTORS STRIKE 12 JANUARY

By a junior doctor

The announcement on 4 January that junior doctors will strike on Tuesday 12 January is good news.

There was never any doubt that NHS Employers would not be able to offer a contract which is acceptable to junior doctors. They have proved everyone right, and it appears that negotiations, while making some quite considerable progress have got no where near to solving the main issues.

Speaking on behalf of the British Medical Association's (BMA) junior doctors committee, Dr Yannis Gourtsoyannis said "over the last few weeks, in the course of negotiations with Government we have encountered only intransigence. It is clear that the government perceives our contract issue as pivotal for its attempt to 'reform' the



Junior doctors protesting in London in October

NHS towards a neoliberal, commercialised system."

Despite months of protest, ACAS, negotiations and endless promises, tweets and bluster from Jeremy Hunt the main issues have remained unchanged. The government is trying to remove the system by which hospitals are fined for overworking their junior doctors, and the government is determined to make Saturday a "normal working day".

Junior doctors are right to be angry. Behind its propaganda the government is trying to take an NHS workforce which is currently breaking its back holding up a creaking system and attempting to destroy what little safeguards and protection we have.

Junior doctors will provide emergency care only for 24 hours from 8am on Tuesday 12 January, and for 48 hours from 8am Tuesday 26 January, and will withdraw

their labour completely from 8am to 5pm on Wednesday 10 February. This model of escalating action, with dates named in advance shows a seriousness not seen from other public sector unions.

Doctors will stage picket lines at all hospitals and at some outpatient clinics and GP surgeries, as well as holding "meet the doctors" events after picket lines at local transport stops or shopping centres. It is crucial for this dispute to develop, make serious wins and to become a wider campaign about the NHS, that it has the grassroots involvement of doctors, other health workers and NHS campaigners.

The longer this goes on the clearer it becomes that this is not about junior doctors. It is just another salvo in an all out attack on all workers in the health service.

Save NHS bursaries

Mark Boothroyd is a nurse at St Thomas' Hospital. He spoke to *Solidarity*.

Cuts to the student nursing bursary will decrease access to nursing education for working-class students.

The psychological impact of that much debt will be a huge barrier. We are the lowest-paid profession of those requiring university-level training: teachers, social workers, doctors. The top salary outside of London is 25k per annum.

The cut will also destroy some of

the public service ethos that means people work so hard, destroy some of that loyalty. It could create an incentive for people to leave the NHS to go into business. It'll change the relationship between the workers and the service.

You'll effectively be paying to work. As student nurses, we do some unpaid work on the wards as part of our training. When the bursary is taken away, we'll be paying for the luxury of working.

The response from nursing schools around the country to the 9 January demo has been excellent. Nurses in my hospital are very

supportive. They recognise how hard it'll be for students. Like any part of the public sector, when they take action they get a lot of support. They're people who've chosen to go into a job that's not well-paid and takes a lot out of you, so there's a lot of goodwill.

We need to build up public support and bigger displays of opposition. There's been a network of students organising the protest. But it needs to become more cohesive, with more reach amongst student nurses, and on wards as well. There is a plan for days of action in the hospital, stuff everyone can

Save our student bursaries!

Saturday 9 January

**London demonstration, assemble noon,
St Thomas' Hospital, SE1 7EH**

bit.ly/NHSbursary

participate in, like student nurses wearing a slogan T-shirt over their uniform, and demonstrations outside hospitals. We want to be able to push the government back by public pressure, develop organisation and build industrial strength. It's not out of the question that student nurses could strike. A lot of students are used to plug gaps due to staffing cuts. Withdrawing that

labour and showing up how dependent the NHS is on their free labour would be telling.

Rank and file nurses understand that if we don't fight back, our jobs and service will be devastated. But the leaderships of the unions aren't making any moves in the direction of a fight like that. So any initiative will come from below.

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